

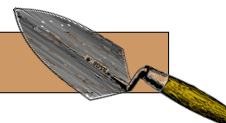


# Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



Volume 19 Issue 1

Spring 2016



## Group News

January's AGM was unusually well-attended. It was good to see so many people prepared turn out in the middle of winter, but particularly so on this occasion since there were important issues for us all to consider.

Phyllis Rouston, our Chairman, reviewed the situation on the venue for our lecture meetings. The unexpected closure of Centre67 last Summer had forced us back into the main Market Hall and, although Centre67 was now open again, our short experience of using their meeting room had revealed some deficiencies and Phyllis didn't feel she could recommend a return. At the same time, the main market Hall was less than ideally suited to our needs and there was still no prospect of us regaining our Tuesday evening slot in the Supper Room.

Phyllis announced, however, that it had been established that the Supper Room would be available to us on the second Thursday of each month (ie as opposed to the second Tuesday, our current regular meeting date) and that a quick poll of members had suggested that this might be acceptable.

After discussion it was agreed that we should change our regular meeting date from the **second Tuesday** of the winter months to the **second Thursday**. **This change would come into effect from October of this year.**

Standing in for the Treasurer, Martin Joyce explained that Finances were currently sound but that looking ahead it was clearly time for us to review our subscription rates. Martin proposed that we should increase individual membership from £12 to £15 and joint membership from £20 to £25. He also proposed that we should increase the visitor's fee from £2 to £3 and possibly ask for a small donation for summer events where the activity has some financial cost, - for example the payment of a guide.

The present fees had been in place for 4 years and it was felt that the increased charges would still represent excellent value. After discussion it was agreed that the proposed new charges should come into effect from January 2017.

Phyllis also spoke firmly about the imperative need of bringing fresh faces onto the Committee. See below for her "call to arms".

*Martin Joyce*

## Appleby Archaeology needs YOU

**My concern this year is for our future.** Most of you will be aware of the difficulties that the Appleby and Westmorland Society is experiencing. Their situation is perhaps a wakeup call for us too.



We as a group have to ask ourselves **Do we want Appleby Archaeology to continue as an active forward-looking organisation?** I hope the answer is yes

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To do this we need you, the members, to support us by coming on to the committee and taking an active role in our future. Your current committee members have all worked to achieve the group's success and have all served for many years. We need new blood.

My tenure as chairman ends in January 2017 and I may not wish to take on a future roll. Martin Railton and I have been committee officers since the group was set up in 1998 (17 years). Our secretary, Richard Stevens and Martin Joyce our newsletter editor have been committee members since 2002 (14 years) and our treasurer Mike Godfrey has held that office for 11 years. Carol Dougherty and Heather Edwards, our current membership secretary, have both fulfilled roles on the committee and have served a number of years.

The time to come forward is now when the present committee can introduce you to what we do. Have a taster. Speak to any one of us.

**Everyone of you has a contribution you can make.**  
Please come forward (or we might have to press gang you).

*Phyl Rouston*

## AGM and Members' Evening 2016

At the Annual General Meeting and Members Evening members listened to a brief roundup of the preceding year as well as outline plans for 2015 and beyond. Following the AGM, those attending were treated to two short talks by Group members.

Firstly, Martin Railton, the group's research officer, spoke on the progress of the Group's new project, which examines the history of the town of Appleby. For the National Festival of Archaeology in 2015, the group carried out a geophysical survey of the King George V playing field where it is believed that the first Grammar School, dating from the 15th Century, had been located. Magnetic anomaly and resistivity surveys were carried out and Martin showed the resultant plots. These indicated a great deal of disturbance but no clear building outlines. Bearing in mind the recent flooding in the town, Martin thought it conceivable that river deposits due to earlier periods of flooding could well be obscuring any remains. Excavation would be the only sure way to find out, which, in the playing field, was thought most unlikely!

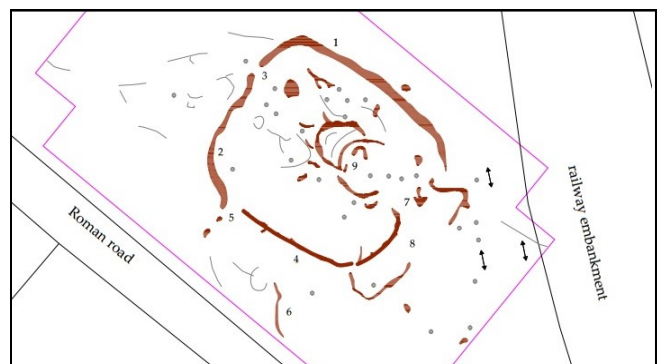
Martin next explained that there was speculation that the medieval boundary of Appleby, prior to its medieval decline, might have extended nearly as far as Burrells. The group had therefore been fieldwalking in the area between there and Scattergate. Martin showed some slides of some of the pottery which had been found, which included a number of medieval jug handles, as well as various items dating between the 17th and 19th Centuries. Finds included a 17th Century wig curler, clay pipes, a small metal hammer used for tamping tobacco and a prehistoric chert flake.

The final part of his talk concentrated on the Roman period. There is no direct evidence of Roman occupation in the town itself, although of course a major Roman road passed nearby. The best evidence for activity near the town appeared to be a small rectangular earthwork not far from Croft Ends, which has been suggested as a possible fortlet adjacent to the Roman road.



*Roman Road near Croft Ends*

The group carried out a magnetic survey on the site in late summer 2015 and the resulting plots were explained by Martin. Although there is clear evidence of the bank and ditch on the ground, the plots show that the feature is more indicative of a native farmstead containing roundhouses than anything Roman.



*Settlement at Croft Ends*

It is possible that a Roman signal station was erected on the remains of the earlier structure, particularly so since the elevated site has a wonderful 360 degree field of vision. But, in all likelihood, the remains are those of an Iron Age or Romano-British farm. Again, excavation should prove the site as one or the other. Members were somewhat amused by the fact that on two occasions in the recent past, the group had examined supposed Roman sites only to find that they were in fact earlier!

Phyl Rouston then spoke of her recent visit to the Bronze Age Copper Mines on Great Orme Head, a name familiar to those insomniacs who listen to the shipping forecast.

Great Orme Head is a massive dolomite peninsula of limestone above Llandudno in North Wales. Using slides Phyl described the location and outlined the geology of what is known locally as "Llandudno's Mountain", before talking about copper mining.



***Llandudno's Mountain***

Copper was the first metal to be used by man, in Asia from 8000 BC and in Europe from 4000BC. Traditionally it was thought that mining was introduced to Britain by the Romans, however it is now known that copper was mined on Great Orme 4000 years ago.

Evidence indicates that the Romans were mining in the area and more recently, between the 17th and 19th centuries, Llandudno was a mining village with three active mines. By the early 1850's the mines were in their decline. The principal reasons for closure were: competitive copper prices from abroad, difficulties in pumping out flooded workings, and the fact that workers could gain better wages and improved conditions working in the rapidly developing Victorian tourist resort of Llandudno. In 1849 the miners broke into a large chamber 60ft below the surface. These were termed the "Old Man's Workings" and contained stone hammers, antler picks, bones, remains of

fires and also some fragments of bronze, thought to be Roman. Some antiquarians at the time thought the mines were earlier - in the terminology of the time either "Old Welsh" or "Celtic" - reasoning that the Romans would have used metal tools.



***Bone Mining Tools***

In the 20th century researchers concluded that mining probably did originate in the Roman Period. However local enthusiasts continued to explore the Great Orme workings. In the 1980s an amateur archaeologist and keen mining explorer, Duncan James, gained entry, by removing a mass of backfilled spoil, to a set of tunnels very different to those observed in other parts of the mine. He soon realised that the shape of these passages and the existence of stone and bone implements, indicated a much earlier period of activity.

Also in the 1980s, Aberconwy Borough Council put forward a scheme to make all known mine shafts safe in what was a desolate post-industrial wasteland and, in the process, to provide a car park. An archaeological brief was carried out to ensure that any features and artefacts were recorded, surveyed and protected. All underground workings to depth of 20m were surveyed. These surveys led to the rediscovery of Bronze Age Mines in 1987.

Passages, tunnels and caverns were discovered containing over 1000 ancient tools, which included stone hammers and bone scrapers used by the miners. The bone tools and charcoal deposits were carbon dated to 1800BC. Until these discoveries, it was assumed that Britain was still in the Stone Age 4000 years ago and that metal mining began in Britain with the Roman invasion. But now we know that the Age of Metal began 4000 years ago. It is estimated that in total 1,700 tons of copper was mined during the Bronze Age, enough to make 10,000 bronze axes. The site is now thought to have been the largest industrial site in the ancient world, with part of the output being exported to Europe.



In 1990 the site was opened to visitors while excavations continued. Excavations are ongoing in 2016, while visitors enjoy a very interesting and well-presented archaeological site.



### *Great Orme Copper Mines*

Phyl's talk concluded with a virtual tour of the mine, courtesy of Microsoft Powerpoint!

*Phyl Rouston*



### **Cumbria Heritage Environment Record Threat**

Your committee was recently informed by the Council for British Archaeology of a potentially significant change to the staffing of the Cumbria Heritage Environment Record (HER). Lancashire County Council, who provide a part time service for Cumbria for the HER, have stated that they intend to cease all Heritage Environment services in April. Although they have now, somewhat belatedly, begun a public consultation, the result, if adopted, would mean that the Cumbria HER could be severely hit unless some other means of providing the service can be found.

Whilst we understand that all Councils are under severe pressure to cut costs at present, as a community archaeology group, your committee felt that we needed to make clear that our concern is for the overall historic environment, of which the HER is a significant part. Any dilution of the HER service calls into question its role in planning and development, as well as that of being a resource for historians and the public in general.

Since we in Cumbria have no legally direct means of contact with Lancashire County Council, I decided to write to the Leader of Cumbria County Council on behalf of Appleby Archaeology, asking for assurance that they would try to maintain the HER in Cumbria in these new circumstances.

I have received a reply from Mark Brennand, who is now the Manager, Countryside Management, for the Council, explaining that both Cumbria and Lancashire have begun working with Historic England in order to "audit both the Cumbria and Lancashire HERs, and to establish the needs of each going forward in the future". This is probably the best that can be expected at the moment but the CBA will be keeping an eye on the situation and have undertaken to inform us of changes as they occur. The committee will keep this under review and similarly advise you as things proceed.

*Richard Stevens*

### **Spring Lectures**

#### **Lime Burning and Lime Kilns in Westmorland**

Dr David Johnson

**Tuesday 8th Mar**

Until the mid 20th century lime touched peoples lives in many ways, being used in buildings and rural trades, as well as in farming. Lime burning goes back many centuries and over 650 kiln sites in Westmorland have been surveyed by the speaker. David's talk will explore considerations of where, how and why lime was produced in Westmorland from both historical and archaeological perspectives.

#### **Furness Abbey and her Daughter Houses: Irish Sea Relations in the Medieval era**

Dr Fiona Edmunds

**Tuesday 12th Apr**

Furness Abbey was located at the very edge of the English realm, and the community benefited from links across the Irish Sea to the Isle of Man and Ireland. This paper explores Furness Abbey's maritime connections, including the foundation of its daughter houses and its literary culture.



**Appleby  
Archaeology**

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